

REMARKS

Restriction Requirement

Applicants herein acknowledge the restriction requirement in the above-referenced application. Claims 1 through 56 are currently pending in the application. The Office has identified the following groups of claims as being drawn to separate inventions:

Group I – claims 17-26, 35-40, 47-52, 54 and 56, drawn to devices, classified in class 257, subclass 680; and

Group II – claims 1-16, 27-34, 41-46, 53 and 55, drawn to methods, classified in class 438, subclass 116.

Applicants hereby elect the claims of Group I, claims claims 17-26, 35-40, 47-52, 54 and 56, without traverse.

Election of Species Requirement

Claims 1 through 56 are also subject to an Election of Species Restriction Requirement.

Four species of invention have been identified:

Species I: “first embodiment” per [0006];

Species II: “second embodiment” per [0009];

Species III: “third embodiment” per [0010]; and

Species IV: “fourth embodiment” per [0011];

Applicants hereby elect, without traverse, to prosecute Species I of the invention as identified by the Examiner and as set forth in claims 18, 24 and 47-52.

Applicants consider claims 17 and 23 to be generic, and note that upon allowance of a generic claim, claims 18-21, 25 and 26 depending therefrom in a non-elected species would also be allowable.

Applicants request an action on the merits of claims 17, 18, 23, 24 and 47-52.

Please Note Information Disclosure Statement

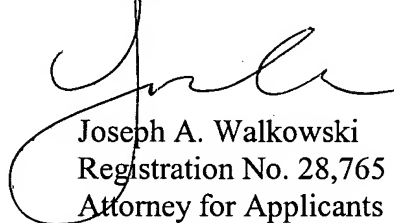
Applicants wish to draw the Examiner's attention to the Information Disclosure Statement filed with the Office on September 17, 2003, and respectfully request that the documents or other information referenced therein be made of record in the present application and that an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form be returned to the undersigned attorney evidencing same.

Should any of the documents, or portions thereof, be unavailable to the Examiner for any reason, please contact the undersigned attorney, who will supply same immediately by facsimile or other suitable method of delivery.

CONCLUSION

An early Office Action on the merits is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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